

March 11, 2009

The Honorable Lisa Jackson  
Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Ariel Rios Building  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Jackson:

At the request of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), we are writing in support of expedient completion of remediation activities at the Summitville Mine Superfund site in southern Colorado. If applicable, we would like to urge the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to strongly consider allocating \$16 million of funding provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) toward the construction of a new Water Treatment Plant at the headwaters of the Alamosa River watershed.

As you may know, in 1992 a retention pond for a cyanide heap leach gold mine called Summitville in the San Juan Mountains failed, sending cyanide and other heavy metals surging down 17 miles of the Alamosa River, an important body of water for some of the oldest water rights in Colorado, tracing before statehood. The pollutants essentially killed the aquatic life in this river and negatively affected the communities along its course.

The CDPHE and the EPA have worked closely to address this serious water quality concern. As part of the cleanup, a retrofitted mine processing facility was established to help treat water emanating from the Summitville site. However, this facility has proved inadequate as it does not have sufficient capacity, and, as a result, millions of gallons of untreated, contaminated water are discharged into the river. For this reason, there is a critical need to construct a new water treatment plant to provide a permanent solution to address these ongoing water quality issues.

Additionally, these funds will help promote jobs and the economy of the San Luis Valley of southern Colorado, a region of Colorado that relies upon this water to produce food and fiber. It will also help the EPA minimize its costs for water treatment at the site.

We hope the EPA will seriously consider this request consistent with all applicable laws and regulations.

Sincerely,

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Mark Udall  
U.S. Senator

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Michael F. Bennet  
U.S. Senator

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John Salazar  
U.S. Representative